CLAIMS

1. A system, comprising:

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application.

a speech animation engine; and

a client application in communication with the speech animation engine,

wherein the client application is operable to perform the following operations:

sending a request for speech animation to the speech animation engine, the request identifying data to be used to generate the speech animation, the speech animation being speech synchronized with facial expressions;

receiving a response from the speech animation engine, the response identifying the generated speech animation; and

using the generated speech animation to animate a talking agent displayed on a user interface of the client application;

and wherein the speech animation engine is operable to perform the following operations:

receiving the request for speech animation from the client application; retrieving the data identified in the request without user intervention; generating the speech animation using the retrieved data; and sending the response identifying the generated speech animation to the client

- 2. The system of claim 1, wherein retrieving the data includes retrieving the data in real time.
- 3. The system of claim 1, wherein the data specifies text to be used to generate the speech animation.
- 4. The system of claim 3, wherein the text includes variable elements.
- 5. The system of claim 1, wherein the data specifies a voice to be used to generate the speech animation.

- 6. The system of claim 1, wherein the data specifies a pool of synonyms; and generating the speech animation includes selecting a synonym from the pool of synonyms.
- 7. The system of claim 1, wherein the request further identifies context information taken from a live session of the client application; and

generating the speech animation includes incorporating the context information into the generated speech animation.

- 8. The system of claim 7, wherein the context information includes information about a user of the client application.
- 9. The system of claim 1, wherein:

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the client application is a web application; and the request is an HTTP request.

- 10. A computer program product, tangibly embodied in an information carrier, the computer program product being operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:
- receiving a request from a client application for speech animation, the request identifying data to be used to generate the speech animation, the speech animation being speech synchronized with facial expressions;

retrieving the data without user intervention;
generating the speech animation using the retrieved data; and
sending a response identifying the generated speech animation to the client
application.

- 11. The product of claim 10, wherein retrieving the data includes retrieving the data in real time.
- 12. The product of claim 10, wherein the data specifies text to be used to generate the speech animation.

- 13. The product of claim 12, wherein the text includes variable elements.
- 14. The product of claim 10, wherein the data specifies a voice to be used to generate the speech animation.
- 15. The product of claim 10, wherein the data specifies a pool of synonyms; and generating the speech animation includes selecting a synonym from the pool of synonyms.
 - 16. The product of claim 10, wherein the request further identifies context information taken from a live session of the client application; and

generating the speech animation includes incorporating the context information into the generated speech animation.

- 17. The product of claim 16, wherein the context information includes information about a user of the client application.
 - 18. The product of claim 10, wherein:
 the client application is a web application; and

the request is an HTTP request.

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